



SAVED TO SERVE

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SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD?

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will address a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 15:29, regarding the baptism of the dead, held by groups such as the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). See the excerpt below from their website regarding baptism for the dead.

Why Do We Baptize for the Dead?

“The doctrine that the living can provide baptism and other essential ordinances to the dead vicariously was revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see [D&C 124](#); [128](#); [132](#)). He learned that the spirits awaiting resurrection are offered not only individual salvation but they can be bound in heaven as husband and wife and be sealed to their fathers and mothers of all generations past and have sealed to them their children of all generations future. The Lord instructed the Prophet that these sacred rites are appropriately performed only in a house built to His name, a temple (see [D&C 124:29–36](#)).

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2009/03/why-do-we-baptize-for-the-dead?lang=eng>

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:29. On the surface, it appears to promote baptizing an individual for someone else who is dead. Let us briefly study the Biblical practice of baptism to see what requirements are connected with it. Before a person makes a decision to be baptized, what must they do? Mark 16:15-16

3. What happens to someone who refuses to believe the gospel and be baptized? Mark 16:16

4. How does a person demonstrate his or her belief in the gospel in preparation for baptism? Acts 2:38; Matthew 3:6

5. Whose teachings will a person follow if they decide to be baptized? Matthew 28:19-20

6. **Note:** Baptism in scripture is connected to belief in the gospel, repentance from sin, and choosing to follow the teachings of Jesus. It is a personal decision a individual must make; no one else can make that decision for them.

7. What instruction is given to those who hear the voice of the Spirit of God and of the bride (New Jerusalem)? Revelation 22:17

8. What must each individual do when they hear God calling them to repent and be baptized? Revelation 3:20

9. What important principle is taught in Psalm 49:7?

10. Those who teach this false theory about “baptism for the dead” also believe in consciousness in the grave or the immortality of the soul. What do the living know, and how much do the dead know? Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10

- a) What perishes once a person is dead? Isaiah 26:14

11. What three other things did King Hezekiah say the dead in the grave cannot do? Isaiah 38:18

12. **Note:** The Bible is clear that the dead do not have consciousness, neither can they praise God or change their mind about serving God once they are dead. If they die unrepentant, they will rise unrepentant and if they die faithful to God, they will rise faithful to God. This is one reason why books such as *The Apocrypha* are rejected as being inspired by God and useful for doctrine because it contains erroneous teachings such as the belief in praying for the sins of dead. Notice the following excerpts from II Maccabees 12:39-42, 44-45.

39 And upon the day following, as the use had been, Judas and his company came to take up **the bodies of them that were slain**, and to bury them with their kinsmen in their fathers' graves.

40 Now **under the coats of every one that was slain they found things consecrated to the idols** of the Jamnites, which is forbidden the Jews by the law. **Then every man saw that this was the cause wherefore they were slain.**

41 All men therefore praising the Lord, the righteous Judge, who had opened the things that were hid,

42 **Betook themselves unto prayer, and besought him that the sin committed might wholly be put out of remembrance.** Besides, that noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forso much as they saw before their eyes the things that came to pass for the sins of those that were slain.

44 **For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.**

45 And also in that he perceived that there was great favour laid up for those that died godly, it was an holy and good thought. **Whereupon he made a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin.**

13. Let's transition back to 1 Corinthians 15 and understand its context. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-13. What is the principal theme of this chapter? **Answer:** Jesus resurrected from the grave and there will be a resurrection from the dead to eternal life.

14. **Note:** In 1 Corinthians 15:29, the phrase "baptized for the dead" means "in behalf of or because of the dead". In other words, those baptized for the dead are people who have chosen to be baptized **because of the godly influence of people who are now dead** and thus, they are preparing to meet them at the first resurrection. Let us confirm these points.

15. In 1 Corinthians 15:15, if Christ isn't raised from the dead, what are we considered?

16. According to 1 Corinthians 15:17, what does it mean for us if Christ isn't raised from the dead?

a) What does it mean for those who have fallen asleep or died believing in Jesus Christ? 1 Corinthians 15:18

17. How would we consider our lives of self-sacrifice if there is no hope of resurrection in Jesus? 1 Corinthians 15:19

18. **Note:** It is clear that Paul is arguing in favor of the fact that there will be a resurrection of the dead, otherwise, all we have lived and believed is in vain. Why would we get baptized because of another person's testimony if they have no hope of ever being resurrected and living again? This is Paul's rhetorical question being asked in 1 Corinthians 15:29. Read 1 Corinthians 15:30, 32 to see how Paul bolsters his argument by saying that we might as well enjoy life **IF there is no resurrection of the dead.**

19. Will there be a resurrection of the righteous dead? When will it occur? 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

20. How does Paul encourage the brethren and conclude the chapter in 1 Corinthians 15:58?

21. Hebrews 11, in principle, further explains the concept of being baptized **because of the godly example of the dead**. Earlier in this lesson, we confirmed that the dead know nothing. With that thought in mind, what does Hebrews 11:4 say about Abel?

22. The godly influence of Abel's life still speaks to us today even though he is dead and in the grave! What reason does Hebrews 12:1 give for us to lay aside every weight and the sins which easily beset or overcome us?

23. **Note:** Here we see that the lives of the faithful men and women mentioned in scripture along with the faithful men and women we know who have died, should encourage us to give our lives to Christ and trust that if we die, we will be a part of the first resurrection, the resurrection of life!

24. Let us now close this lesson with hope and practical godliness. Baptism signifies spiritual death to sin and then rising to live as Jesus lived. Paul died to self-daily (1 Corinthians 15:31). When we awake every day and when a person rises up out of the literal baptismal water, what are we to awake to? 1 Corinthians 15:34

25. As we awake to live a righteous life daily through the power of Jesus, what should give us encouragement to press onward? Hebrews 11:39, 40 **Answer:** Those who died in the Lord have not yet received the promise of eternal life. They are waiting for us to finish our course so that we can receive it together at the first resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

26. What thoughts should we keep before our minds to encourage us? 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9

27. What will help us lose sight of this world and focus on the gift of eternal life in Jesus? Philippians 3:7-8

“The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are two monumental pillars, one without and one within the church. Upon these ordinances Christ has inscribed the name of the true God.” {CCh 295.1}